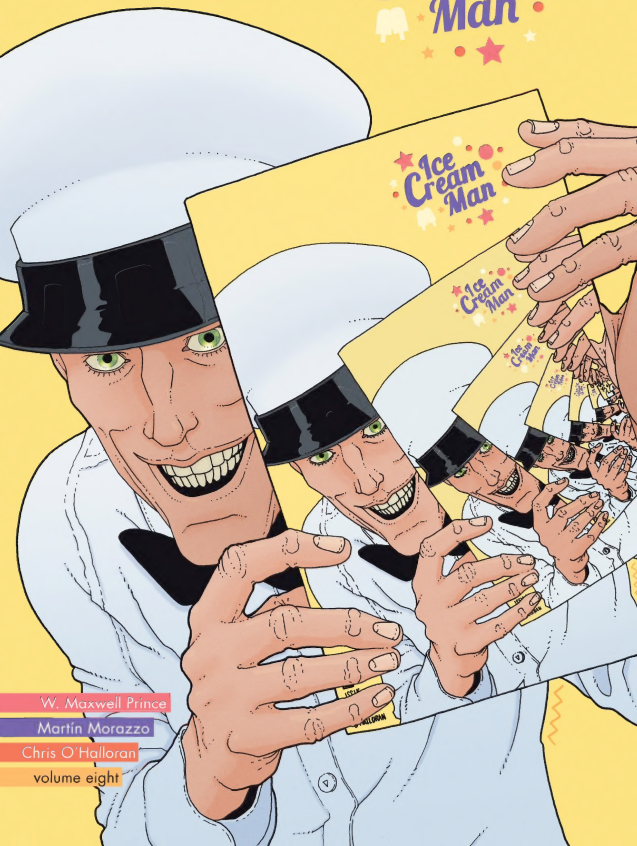


Ice Cream Man

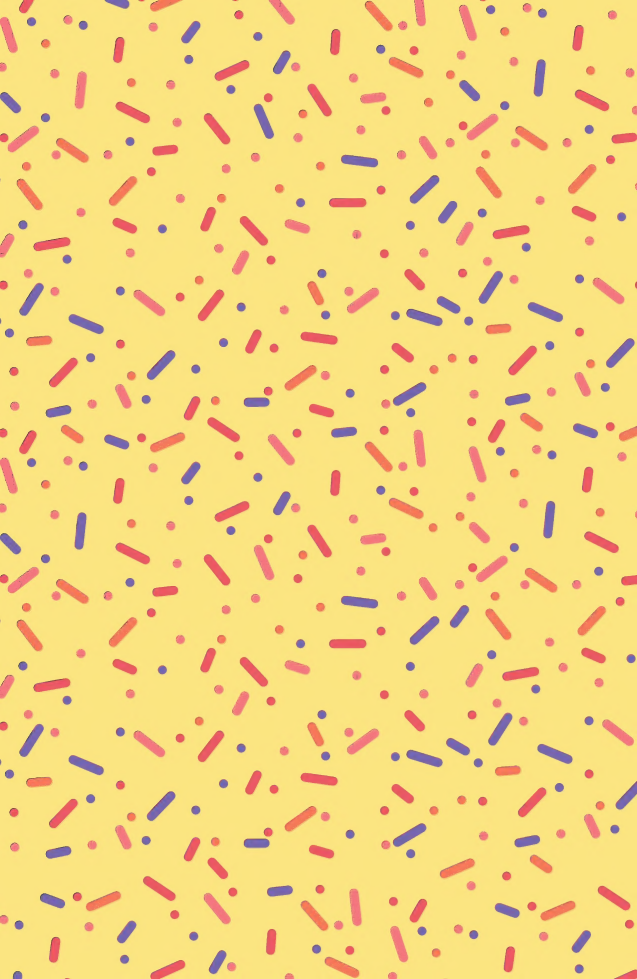


W. Maxwell Prince

Martin Morazzo

Chris O'Halloran

volume eight





VOLUME EIGHT
• SUBJECTS & OBJECTS •

WRITTEN BY **W. MAXWELL PRINCE**

ART BY **MARTÍN MORAZZO**

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LETTERING BY **GOOD OLD NEON**

COVER DESIGN BY **SHANNA MATUSZAK & TRICIA RAMOS**

INTERIOR DESIGN BY **GOOD OLD NEON**

"A story is not like real life; it's like a table with just a few things on it. The "meaning" of the table is made by the choice of things and their relation to one another."

—George Saunders, "A Swim in the Pond in the Rain"



What's the best medicine?
Email wmaxwellprince@gmail.com

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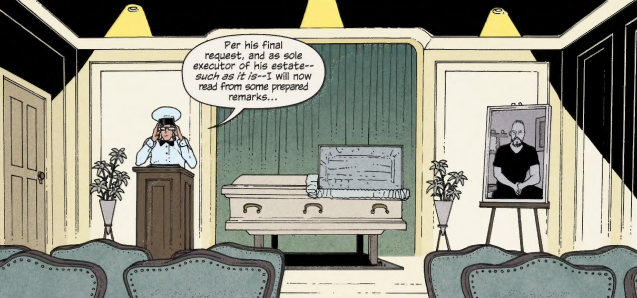
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CHAPTER 29
LIVING WILL

**Ice
Cream
Man**







Per his final request, and as sole executor of his estate--such as it is--I will now read from some prepared remarks...



Ahem.



Mister Parson: a writer, or so he called himself.



Body: stocky, muscular...but soft in the middle.



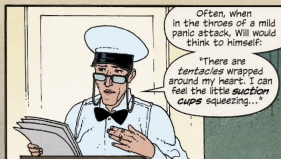
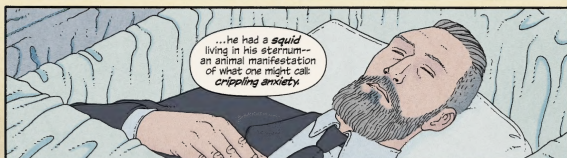
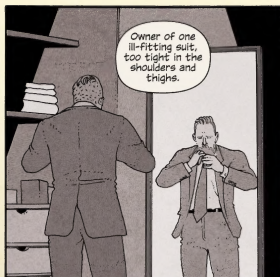
He was five-foot-nine, yet insisted to others (despite all obvious appearances) that he was, in fact, five-foot-ten.



This one-inch fib, born of a tired and pitiable Napoleon complex, lasted the full duration of his existence on Earth.

One measly inch.

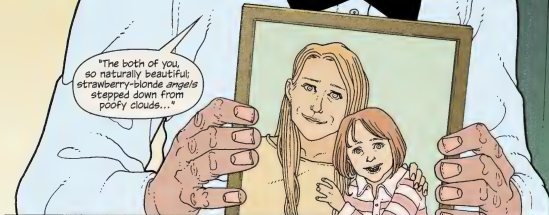








"The both of you, so naturally beautiful; strawberry-blond angels stepped down from poofy clouds..."



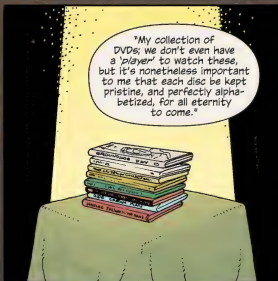
"I bequeath to you the following..."



"Our two cats, Mischief and Mayhem. They are, as near as I can tell, 'somewhere on the spectrum,' and thus a handful to take care of day to day."



"My collection of DVDs; we don't even have a 'player' to watch these, but it's nonetheless important to me that each disc be kept pristine, and perfectly alphabetized, for all eternity to come."

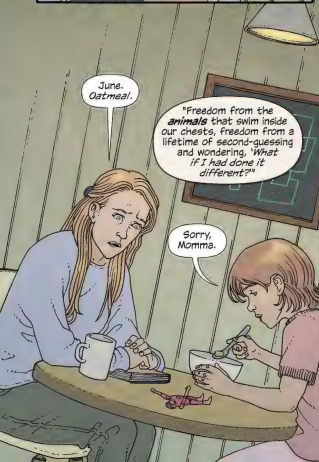
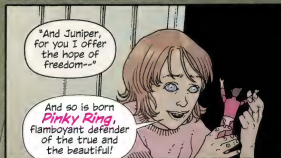


"My secret stash of drugs: cocaine, **opioids**, hallucinogens. I keep this stuff in various drawers around the house. Please toss it all into the sea, as fast as you possibly can; they never brought me a single thing I wanted."



"And my boots. Never was a more perfect pair cobbled. They could use to be resoled, if it's not too much trouble."





Welcome to
WILL-VILLE!



It's all
Will...

An
amusement
park of the
Self!



Where I
come from,
we call that
solipsism.

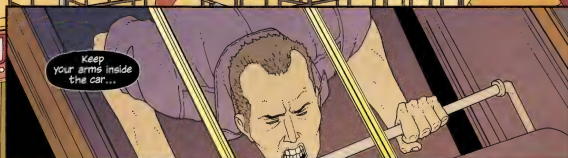


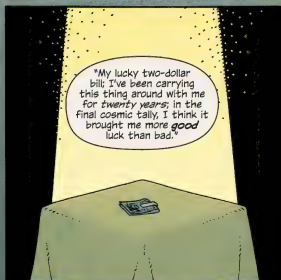
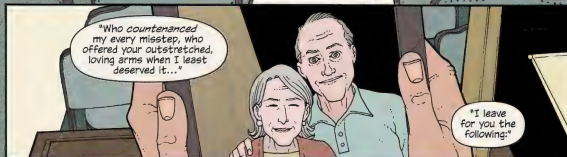
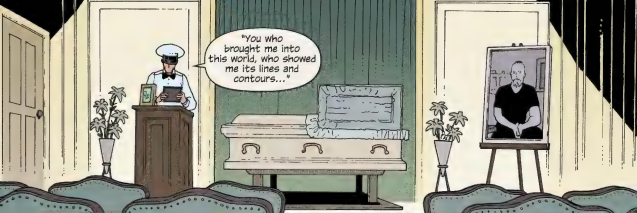
You talk
enough to ride,
Corey?

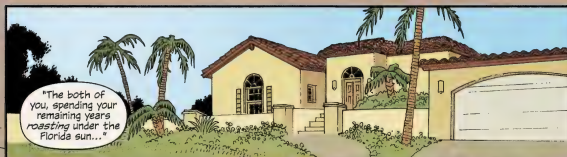


...people die,
but they can't
take anything with
them to the
next place.









"The both of you, spending your remaining years roasting under the Florida sun..."

"Dad, I leave for you the cure to all **addictions**. Whatever it is you need to stay away from: the pills, the cigarettes, the shopping catalogues. The endless array of compulsive behaviors..."

"You're a good man, and you deserve to be happier than you are..."



"...unburdened by the **hunger**s that have destroyed our bloodline..."

"And Mom, for you I leave the knowledge that: **hey**, you did a great job."



"I was, for large stretches of my life, a **happy** and prosperous person. And much of that--maybe **all** of it--was because of you."

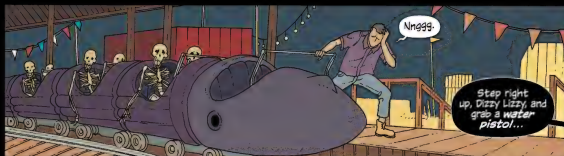


"Please, find some **peace** during this last portion of your life."



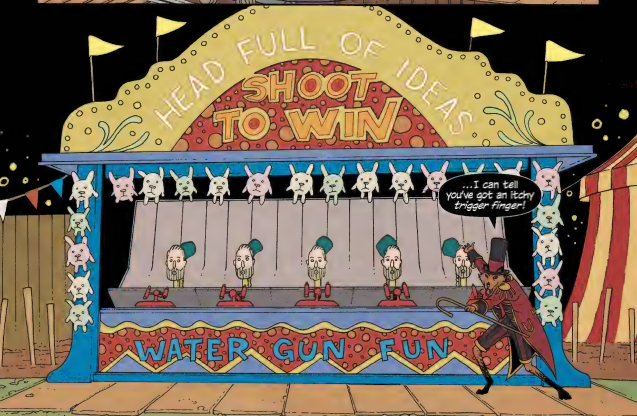
"Peace and love for everyone. **Peace** for all. That's what I wish."

"A prize for every player..."



Nnggg.

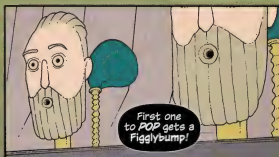
Step right up, Dizzy Lizzy, and grab a water pistol...



...I can tell you've got an itchy trigger finger!



Shoot the water into Will's mouth until the balloon--his brain!--explodes.

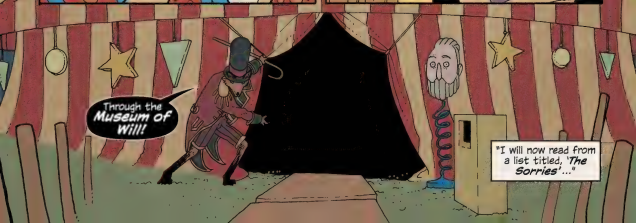


First one to POP gets a Figglybump!



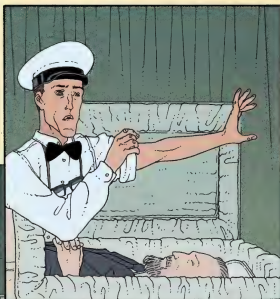
What the fuck's a Figglybump?

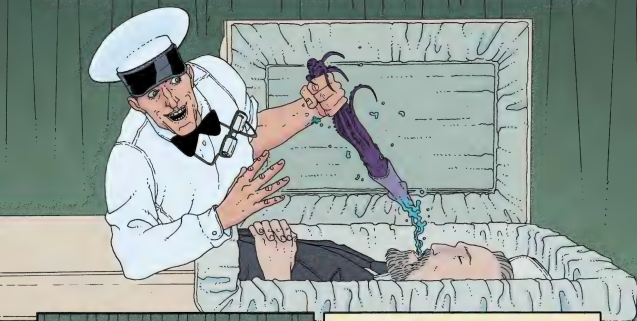
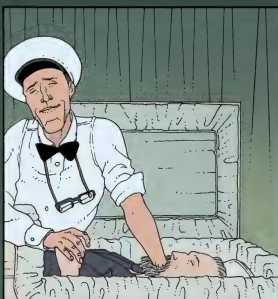
OnYourMark
GetSetGo!



"I will now read from a list titled, 'The Sorries'..."









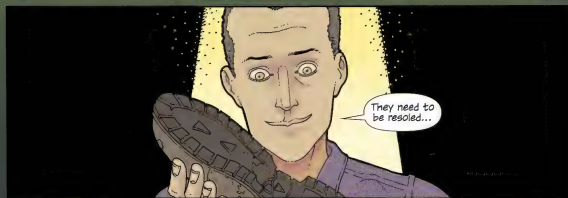
Idiosyncratic
cats and bygone
media...



Cocaine and
oxycodone and
psilocybin...



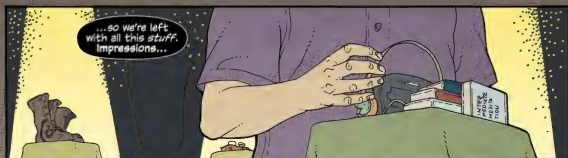
A shitty
pair of leather
boots.



They need to
be resoled...



...people die,
but they can't
take anything with
them to the
next place.

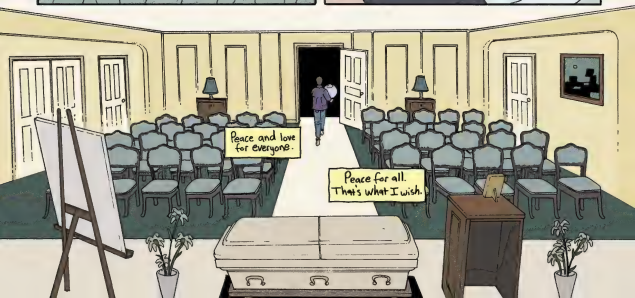




A man with a beard, wearing a purple short-sleeved shirt, blue jeans, and brown boots, is walking away from the viewer down a long white aisle in a funeral home. He is wearing a headset with a microphone and holding a small black device in his right hand. The room has green carpeting, wooden chairs on either side of the aisle, and a casket at the end. A speech bubble above the casket contains the text "...until the day you die." A portrait of a man is visible on an easel to the right.

*...until
the day you
die.*





IN PEACEFUL MEMORY



WILLIAM M. PARSON

MARCH 4th, 1985 - APRIL 20th, 2022



He was a writer, or so he called himself.

*He had a lot stuff, including old DVDs,
various drugs, and a stellar pair of leather boots.*

He was full to the brim with regrets—but who isn't?

*There was also—and this needs to be emphasized—a **lot**
he was proud of, a lot of people he **loved** and cherished.
(Even if he let them down from time to time.)*

He did his best, or at least he tried to.

That's all we can really do in the end.



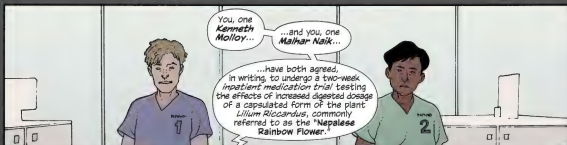
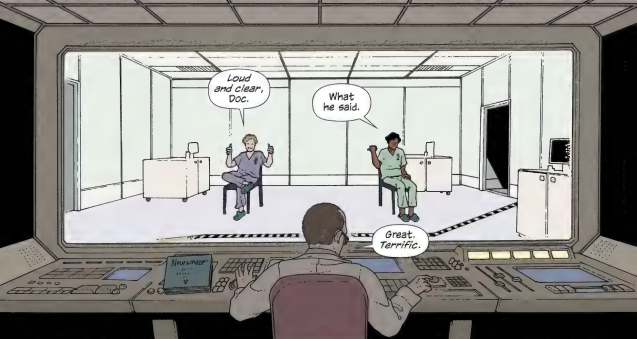
CHAPTER 30

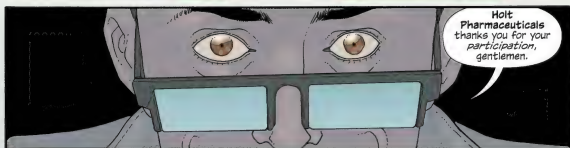
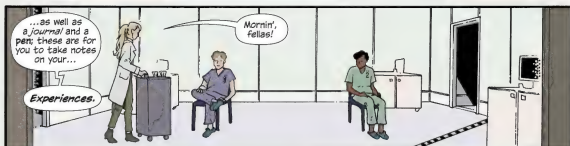
EXPERIMENTAL STORYTELLING



Give a
thumbs-up if
you can both
hear me.



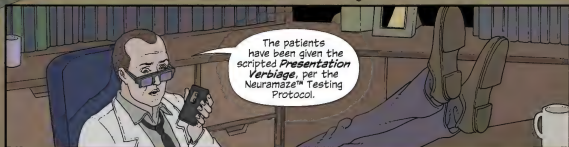






Voice notes,
Doctor Charles
Benjamin, May
twenty-fifth...

Study
0030 is officially
underway.



The patients
have been given the
scripted *Presentation
Verbiage*, per the
Neuramaze™ Testing
Protocol.



"Both now return to their
assigned rooms, having each
ingested 20mg of Neuramaze™
delayed-release tablets."

"Patient Molloy, following a
pre-trial one-on-one meeting,
believes *erroneously* that
he was given a placebo."



Hey
look, we're
neighbors.



"Patient Naik
is under no such
misconception."

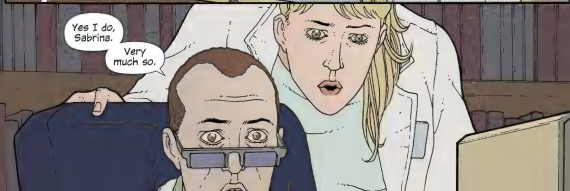
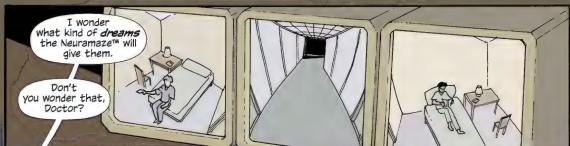
...good
night.



I look forward to
private debriefing sessions
with each subject--who knows what
kinds of *ideas* might manifest under
the influence of our cutting-
edge hallucinogen?

*0030
begins in
earnest!*

Who ya
talking to,
Doc?



Kenneth Molloy,
May 25th.



Like Dr. Charles explained in
our little fête-à-fête: I wasn't
given any Neuramaze™--all I
got was a sugar pill.



It's the other
guy who's in for
a trip, man.

Honestly?
I feel great.
Super great!



And hey--they got
TV in our rooms.
That's pretty nice.



But the connection's
totally fucked up...



...all you get are these
rainbow swirls and shit.

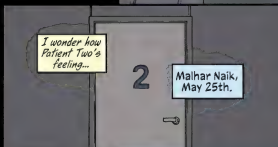
Ah, well. I'll just
lie back and relax, see
if I can't fit a nap in.



I wonder how
Patient Two's
feeling...

2

Malhar Naik,
May 25th.





There's something **breathing** in the corner of the ceiling.

It's not moving... but I can *hear* it.



That **sound**... like a car with a bad engine-- but *slimier*.

BIC BIC BICCC



I just gotta remember: it ain't **real**. It's the *meds* they have me on.



It's all part of the experiment. The Neuramaze volunteer trial.

There ain't nothing up there, no siree.



Remember: *none* of it's real.

The Next Day...

I hope you
both got enough
sleep...

Like
a *baby*,
Doc.

I was,
uh, up for a
while...

Before we
continue, I wanted to
pause and see if either
of you had any questions
or concerns?

Yeah,
actually...

I think you
oughta get the cable
guy in here to come
fix those TVs.

It'd go
a long way
toward making
a patient more
comfortable.

Hm.
Noted.

...and
Mister
Naik?

N-no questions
at this time, your
honor.



Kenneth Molloy,
May 26th.

Another placebo for
Patient Numero Uno.

Feeling okay, but
also: a little, like,
queasy, maybe?

Could be that shrimp
cocktail they gave us for
lunch; seafood always
fucks with my stomach.

At least they went and
fixed the goddamn TV.
Thought I was gonna
die from boredom...

A pen can
be used to create
entire worlds,
Kenneth...

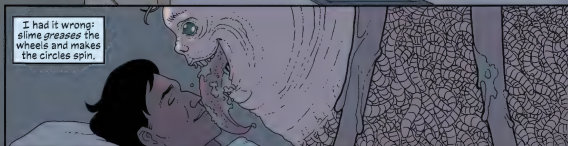
Isn't that
something?

Huh.
Never seen this
show before.

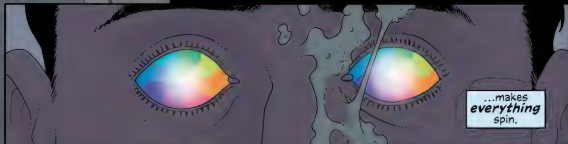


Malhar Naik,
I don't know the
date anymore.

...the crawling thing
from the ceiling is
my *best friend* in
the whole world.



I had it wrong:
slime greases the
wheels and makes
the circles spin.



...makes
everything
spin.



They serve crustaceans
down at the medicine
factory, did you know?

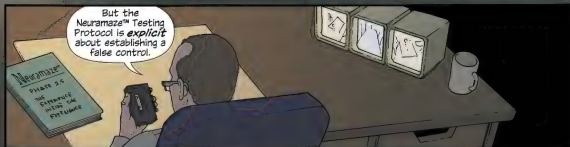


Remember:
nothing's real...
not even *ME*.

"How are you
feeling, Kenny?"







"...and after employing the *Emotive Trigger Question* at least three times during our private session, his brain function seems to be following the path as laid out in the Neuramaze™ Degeneration Schedule."

Christ,
what the fuck's
happening
to me?

But we're
watching both patients
closely on the CC TVs--
they're perfectly *safe*--
in our regulated
environment.

"For Mr. Naik's part,
things continue apace."

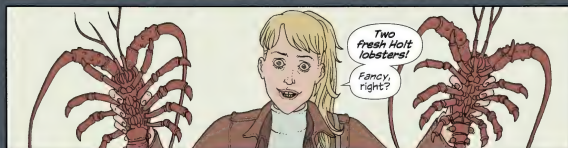
Hello, little
prawn.

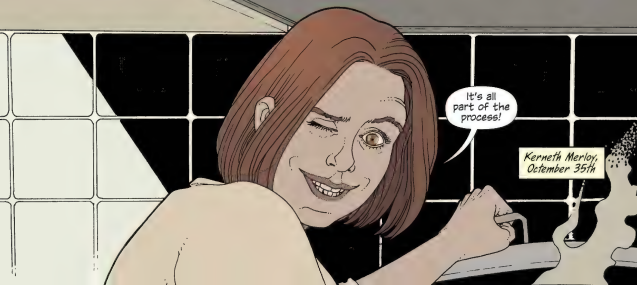
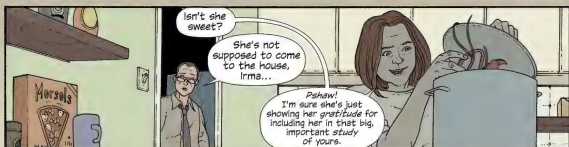
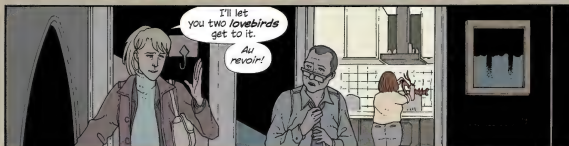
Where'd you
get such a lovely--
looking hat?

Very
promising.

...thus concludes
my audio notes for the
day; it's mine and Irma's
thirtieth anniversary
tonight, and I don't
want to be late
for dinner.

Dr. Benjamin,
over and out.





Kerneth Merloy,
October 35th

My fingers
are snakes.
I think maybe
they've always
been snakes?



And there's something
big and wet in the far
corner of the ceiling.
I can hear it...*RASPING.*



**BIC
BICCC**



I gotta get out of
here! I think I might
be freaking out, man.



**SOS!
Patient One
needs an
antacid!**



No...





BIC

*I don't think
they gave me
a placebo.*








Later...



Charles?
I didn't expect
you home so
early.



Per the
Neuramaze™ Disaster
Protocol, I bagged the
body and disinfected
the contaminated
hallway...



Charles.
You're not making
any sense. What
happened?

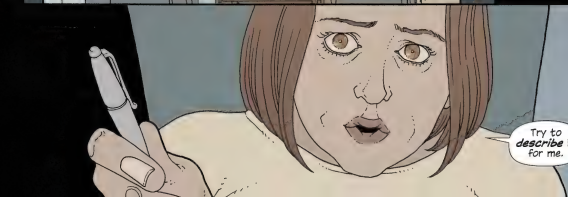


Patient
One has...
expired.

It all
got fucked
up...




Oh,
you poor
thing...



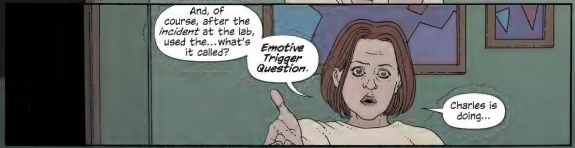
Later still...

I followed
your instructions
to a T...





I snuck the medication into the seafood; put a vase of the *Rainbow Lilies* next to his bed...



And, of course, after the incident at the lab, used the...what's it called?

Emotive Trigger Question.

Charles is doing...



"...as expected."

In the corner of the ceiling. **Look!**



BIC

Look!



You seem troubled, Irma. Can I ask what's wrong?

It's just...




We've been married for thirty years, you know?



We used to go line dancing on Friday nights...



I *betrayed* the man I love. But I understand that it's for a *greater good*.



The *experiment*. The therapeutic potential of **Neuramaze™**...



Exactly right, Irma. *Exactly right*. "A greater good."

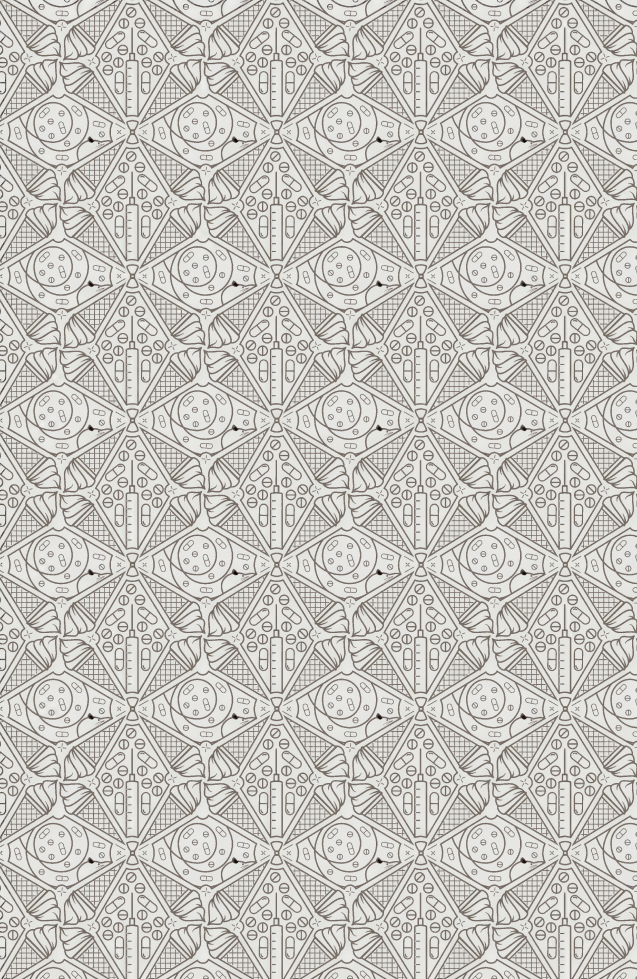
As for the sense of betrayal you mentioned, I'm wondering if you wouldn't mind explicating a bit more...

How does
that make you
feel?

DR.
M. NAIK

ICM

HOLT
TISSUES



CHAPTER 31

A SCALE
(SORT OF A POEM)



CHAPTER 31
A SCALE
(SORT OF A POEM)

Oh my God,
she's here.



Hello, Blossom.



First days at home.
The house is filled



with the scent of
baby soap and talc.



She coos from her
bassinet, swaddled
in layers of linen.



I am in love—she has
cast a **hook** in my heart.



Every few hours,
Blossom must drink
from her mother's
breasts—they are



connected, the two of
them, deeper than I can
possibly understand...

Look at them, bound
together by **need**.

And still I do



what I can:

refrigerate the
pumped milk



prepare makeshift,
nutrient-deficient
dinners



dispose of the
soiled diapers...

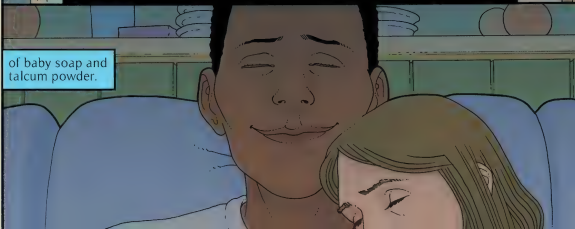


What beautiful days,
those early ones!

The rooms were
filled with the scent



of baby soap and
talcum powder.



Two years flick by faster
than the speed of a light ray.

Already Blossom is

walking.

Blossoming.

Already her tongue clicks
with the beginnings

Come on,
sweetie. You can
do it.

of language.

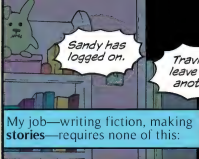
da-da

Vanessa has returned to
work; she **swims** in a sea
of emails and spreadsheets
and conference calls...

We need to
bring his utilization
up before the
end of Q3.

The voices of business-people
and their attendant business
echo through our little home:

Jim has
dialed in.



Sandy has
logged on.

My job—writing fiction, making
stories—requires none of this:

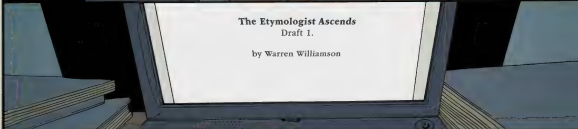


Travis has to
leave early for
another call.



...otherwise
we need to cut
him loose.

I swim in the realm of
the **mind**, down rivers
of daydream; I eat lunch
in my friggin' pajamas.



The Etymologist Ascends
Draft 1.

by Warren Williamson

At night, we bathe our
little girl. The soap!



it smells so lovely. And
just listen to that sound...

the clackety-clack of
a person in bloom.



da-da.
ma-ma.

Five years on, the
blink of an eye

Vanessa and I
have **changed**—

the hooks in our hearts,
the ones that first pulled
us together, they've

dislodged, as from the
mouth of a wriggling fish.

now we are:

two very
tired people

who have come to feel

differently.

I drew
a guppy!

Divorce—the best thing,
we agree, for Blossom,

It's
signed.

whose long days
are now filled with:

multiplication tables; funny books;
the special, fleeting light that bounces
off of an art project covered in glitter.

When we tell
her, we say:

Momma and
Dadda still care
about each
other.

...we **playact** at
love, for her...

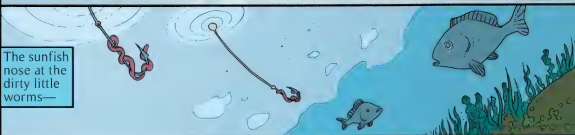
Anything for this
amazing little girl.

We can agree on that
much, her mother and I.

You **blink** and
suddenly it all
changes.

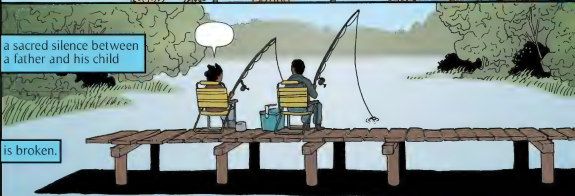
Blossom, age twelve.

Weekend fishing trip
to the reservoir.



The sunfish
nose at the
dirty little
worms—

dandelions bend
in the direction of
the light, and then:



a sacred silence between
a father and his child

is broken.



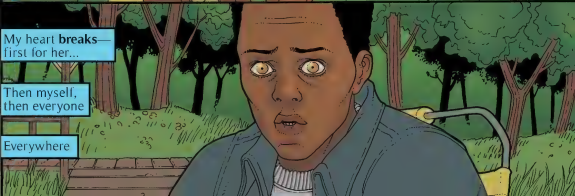
Someone at school has
called her a certain word.

That word.

My heart **breaks**—
first for her...

Then myself,
then everyone

Everywhere





I try to explain, but
my voice sounds like
a **textbook**—



Analytical, clinical.
Failing to honor the
truth of what it means



to look like us.

How can one possibly
explain, to a child



The fundamental
cruelty of...



Everything.



There aren't enough
words in the world.

She's fifteen and we're dancing
to old pop music in the den...



We dance and clap;
we smile and snap.



She is the last hook
in my heart—the one
that never comes out.



Watching her move
is like watching

poetry. Stanzas of
sinew and skin.

...a couplet,
circling...



We dance and clap;
we smile and



She's eighteen and
leaving for college.



We—myself, her mother, her
stepfather Tom—are all so proud

and also:



grieving. Our little girl
is going, going, going



away.



One final **embrace**—tighter than
the molecules of solid matter.



And I swear...



I can still smell the **soap**
on the nape of her neck.

Time, the heavyweight champion of the world, keeps winning the fight.

A few years pass...

I spend my days as I ever have—but the **fish** don't show up like they used to.

I work on my book; I forget to feed the guppy on the sill.

"At the foot of the mountain, through the narrow lanes made by rows of ramshackle village huts, the etymologist walks alongside his guide, a large stack of money weighing down his pocket..."

It's hard to keep things alive when you live alone.

Though never really alone...

ICMAPP

BLOSSOM
Miss you, dad.

NOW

I try my hand at dating—

a colorful carousel of genuinely **lovely** women...

There's Sharon, whose ex-husband hit her with a car.

...mowed me down right in front of the house!

Terry, whose eyes well up when she speaks about her deployed son.

It's I.E.D.s that scare me the most...

And Linda—smart, kind, sophisticated...

I've read some of your short stories, Warren.

They're really fantastic.

I'm not sure why, but

Thanks, Linda.

I never call her back.

Some months pass
and I do my best

to dodge the
clock's **uppercut**.

It's a gray-blue day;
Blossom meets me
at our favorite diner.

The milkshakes here

are some kind
of **magic trick**.

I think
I might be
a loner or
something.

Yeah,
maybe just a
little.

She tells me all
about her major...

Analytics.
It's just numbers
and shit. **Data**
sets...

Speaking
of data!

I tell her about
my writing...

WILLIAMSON
THE
ETIMOLOGIST
ASCENDS

Guess
who made the
best-seller
list?

I see
everyone on campus
reading it. People really
love you, Dad.

People love you, and
you love them back.

The sides of a
scale lower

and then
rise.

The Williamsons
ain't doing too bad,
are they?

Look at my girl,
on her way **up**.



My daddy sure
is looking old.



It's subtle at first,
but after a while you
start to see it clearly:

His hands—

they shake
with each sip.

Varicose.

You can
keep that
copy.

...It's a
collectible
now.

Vibrating...

Can
you sign it
for me?

As if little tremors
travel from his heart
to his fingertips.

Time really is the all-
out champ, isn't it?

For Blossom...
The hook
in my heart

Two punches and a rope-a-dope later:

I'm twenty-six, in grad school for God knows what reason.

My cohort is throwing a **beach party** on a chilly autumn night.

A boy who we all call **Worm** is making a fool of himself—earning his moniker, *writhing* around like a total maniac.

Woo!

Who's up for skinny-dipping?

It's fifty degrees out. And also:

I hate my body; I have trouble looking in the mirror after a shower.

Hard pass.

It's fifty degrees, but there goes Worm...

Woo-hoo!

...caution and cock to the wind.

At first we think he's saying **KELP**—

the shallows are, after all, full of thick green algae.



But as the screams get louder, the word becomes crystal clear:



HELP!



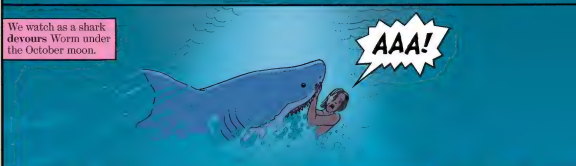
We all watch, completely powerless—a bunch of drunk master's students, paralyzed in cold sand.

Oh my God...



We watch as a shark devours Worm under the October moon.

AAA!



The tide ebbs from the surf...

WORM!



and there's not a single thing you can do about it.



They flow forward:

I'm thirty-two and working downtown for one of those giant mega-corporations.

Blossom Williamson:
Senior Data Analyst.

During lunch one day, a guy named Bill from the accounting department jumps off the roof of our skyscraper.

His body *whooshes* right past the window of my cubicle—

I almost mistake him for a bird.

And I can't help but think, as Bill plummets toward the sidewalk,

that most of adult life is just...

watching people die.

Next year —
Thanksgiving
dinner.

Everyone's around the
table: Dad, Mom, Tom.

Look at them...

Skin leathered,
hair thinning.

A bunch of
tired people

whose bodies are
breaking down.

Are
you okay,
Warren?

Nng.
Fit as a
fiddle.

Dad...

I'm fine,
sweetie.

Just got
a hook caught
in there is
all.

I turn forty and decide to start dating again.

There's Darren, whose wife left him for his own brother.

Is there a German word for **DOUBLE** betrayal? I bet there is...

Rick, who gives me the absolute creeps.

Phonetriss fers. His name's **Rupert**.

And Genevieve, who kisses so well during sex it almost makes me cry.

What say we get out of here, huh?

But at the end of the day, none of it **works**.

Sure, sounds great.

I just really like being alone.

Winter comes.



My dad's on a book tour for the reprint of his first novel; he's doing a reading just a couple towns over.



I sneak in and sit there, amongst his rapt devotees, listening to him talk...

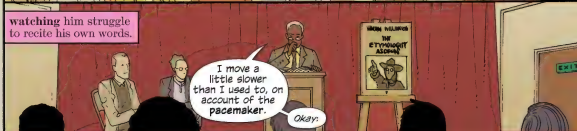
~Cough~
If you'll forgive me...



watching him struggle to recite his own words.

I move a little slower than I used to, on account of the pacemaker.

Okay.



"At the foot of the mountain, through the narrow lanes made by rows of ramshackle village huts, the etymologist walks alongside his guide, a large stack of money weighing down his pocket."

"So you study bugs," Sam says...



I slip out the back before he's done...



I've already got a signed copy.



A few months later, I
make a trip to the shore.

The very same beach
where—what seems
like a **lifetime** ago—



I watched the water around Worm's
body turn a deep crimson red.



His real name was **Ronald**; he
was getting his doctorate in
word origins and philology.

An **etymologist**.
Isn't that funny?

So many things are
funny like that.



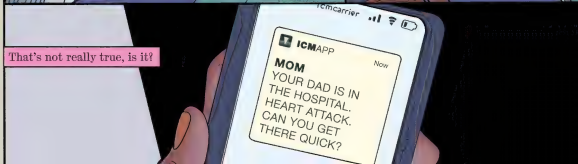
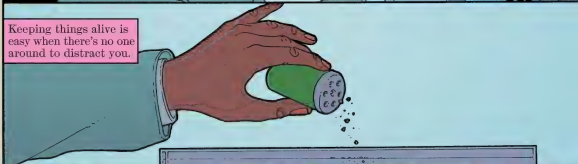
The tide rushes to the
shore to kiss your feet...



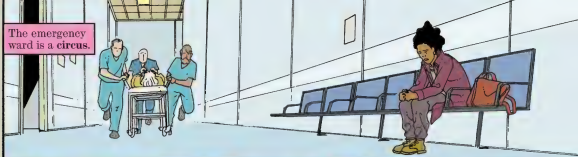
it ebbs back and leaves
you with only **yourself**.

"kelp"





The emergency ward is a circus.



Literally.



Stroke victim in critical condition!

"Good evening, laydees and jermzz."

Over and over, you watch people fade away...



Miss Williamson?

a boy eaten by a shark; a man flying down a city building;



I'm sorry. His *heart* just won't keep.

that clown; my old man



Time wins every time.

Blossom...

Hi, Daddy.

The fish don't come around anymore, do they?

The fish are still there...

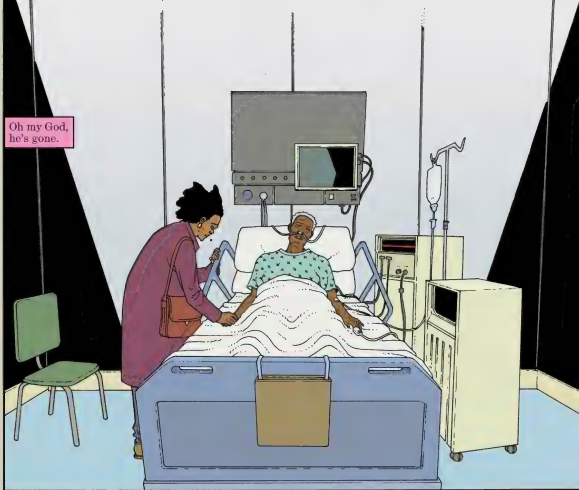
They just need a little food is all.

...do you smell that?

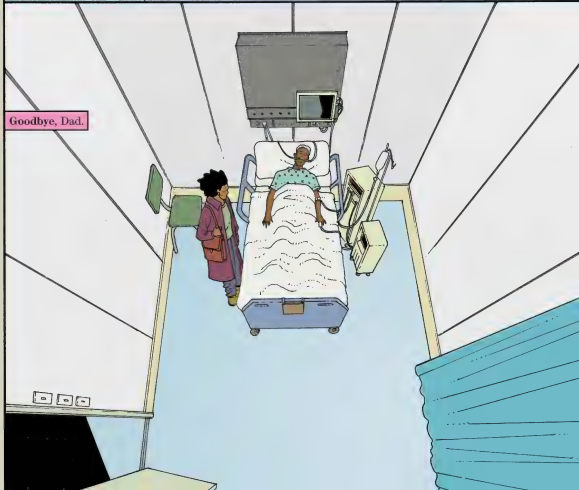
Baby soap.

I love that smell...

Oh my God,
he's gone.



Goodbye, Dad.





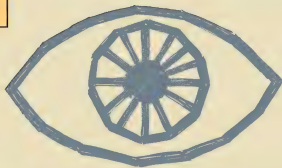


A PRELUDE TO CHAPTER 32



PRESENTS

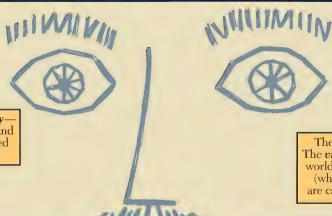
There is the
image...



SEMIOTICS

FOR MISSING PERSONS

In **semiotic theory**—
the study of signs and
symbols—it's called
the "*signifier*."



The representation.
The *visual code* for real-
world objects and ideas
(which, incidentally,
are called "*referents*").

This is an image of **Doug** (as drawn by his daughter, Ginny).



And this is *actually* Doug, who is late once again to pick Ginny up from soccer practice.



This is an image of a **clock**.



And this is Doug, feeling the weight of *time* deep in his chest—how the ticks of his *rotten little heart* occur at irregular intervals, always a beat or two behind...



This is the emoji for a **broken heart**. (Emojis are highly efficient symbols, packed to the pixel with meaning and potential.)



And this is Doug being told that divorce papers have already been drawn up—that he's no longer welcome in his own home.



This is an image of
Doug *falling*.

And this is Doug, though seated, feeling
nonetheless as if there's *nothing* beneath
his body to stop him from plummeting to
the very center of the Earth.

What
am I gonna
do?

My
advice?

Drink
those worries
away, man!

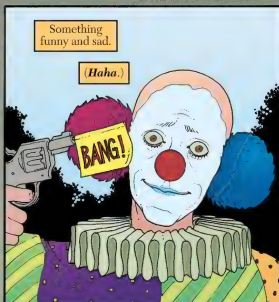
Bad idea




Images hold power over
the entire world...

All the pretty
pictures...

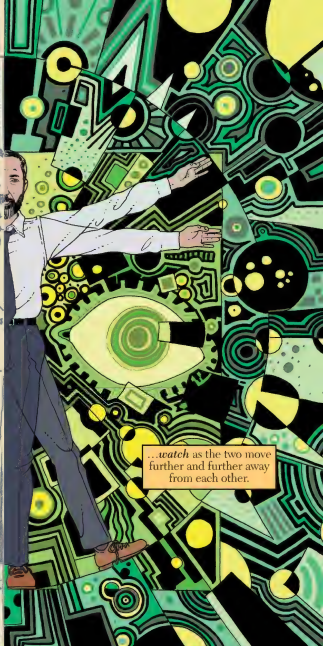
Angora






Referents present themselves, but *images* betray them...


The relationship between the signifier and the signified has become *estranged*...



...watch as the two move further and further away from each other.



Though, of course, there's a fundamental problem here: *this isn't even really Doug*.



It's just another *image*. (An image of an image!)

What are you looking at?



This is the real Doug.
(Though not really—it's just
another image, isn't it?)

Fuck off,
why don't
ya?



The **real** Doug—the
guy who smells of
rye and aftershave and
sour underarm sweat—is
out among **you**
somewhere...



Perspiring,
maybe *murmuring*
a little bit...

Tick-tock
goes my rotten
little heart.



His head *assailed* by an
endless carousel of stimuli,
totally confused by all of this
totally confusing shit.



If you see him, tell him his
family is looking for him.

Tick-
tock



Tell him he's loved;
tell him he's forgiven.



Tell him to
come home.





Ice Cream Man

CHAPTER 32
RECOVERY

12
STEPS
TO
RECOVERY

AFTER M.C. RICHER



**Cassandra Rehabilitation &
Detox Center**

Promotional Pamphlet



STOP USING AND START LIVING!



Recovery

At the **Cassandra Rehabilitation & Detox Center**, addicts of all stripes can convalesce to better health using our patent-pending 28-day **Twelve Mighty Steps Toward Sobriety™** program:

- Admit (with humility) that you have a problem.
- Understand that there are powers greater than you.
- Give yourself over to the process.
- Make a moral inventory; lists are good.
- Look yourself in the mirror and speak the Real Truth.
- Stand in the morning sun and feel the warm hand of God on your cheek.
- Commune with the dead.
- Relapse.
- Admit (with humility) that you have (and always will have) a problem.
- Try to make amends, for all the good it will do.
- Start a new hobby.
- Build a wall around your mind and never, ever look over.

DISCOVER THE POWER OF CHOICE!

CASSANDRA REHAB AND DETOX is not responsible for any harm that may come to our patients while on the premises. Those staying in our facility might experience a number of unintended side effects, including (but not limited to) nausea, visions of past and future, a longing for a home you never had, dysphagia, memories of someone else's life, general confusion, all-consuming regret, blue bile, green bile, orange bile, bites of pretty much every color in the rainbow, dark thoughts, temporary perception of the shadow self, barnacles, gaiters, HPV, suicidal ideations, a hatred for the sun in all its shiny constancy, hair loss, limb growth, the sudden urge to jump on a trampolene and do a double-somersault, love of ether, sensations withdrawal, withdrawal from narcotics (and attendant effects), the certainty that you've heard the voice of the Almighty Creator, sadness, sexual, hearing loss, protracted kidney, primitive, sexual dysfunction, walks through someone else's dream, visitors in dreams of your own, hunger, loss of appetite, visions of deceased relatives, the sound of your life being narrated in the third person, the sense that you're being drawn, somehow, by someone else's hand, anhedonia, good chase, the giggles, the wriggles, the desire to turn your life's story into a poem of some sort, hot flashes, cold flashes, tepid flashes, flashes of no discernible temperature, and the ability to see a wall around your head that no one else knows is there.

*Please note that any and all experiences previously described are strictly the burden of the patient, and that Cassandra Rehab is not liable for any psychic fallout from said experiences. Should you have a concern regarding this promise, please feel free to contact our main office. (Though do note that the phones have been a little on the fritz, and are known to ring and ring for hours without a warm body picking up.) Either way, we hope your stay is a healthy one, and that you can find the will to build an invisible wall tall enough to block out the NOISE from the outside world, such as narcotics or sex or streaming television or social media or whatever compulsion that has taken root in your mind like the gnarled arms of some ancient tree. May we all get better, eventually, or may we all find solace in the fact that we may never get better, all of us, forever.

On my first day
at the Cassandra
Rehab Center,
I admit
(with humility)
that I have a
problem.



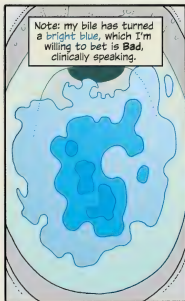
Day two and
I'm feeling a *lot*
better. Just
way more positive
about the whole
recovery
experience in
general.



Day three is kind of a blur, on account of what I guess you'd call "withdrawal symptoms."



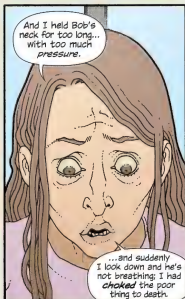
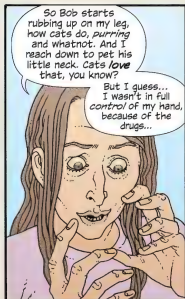
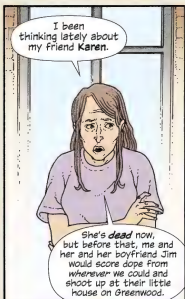
Same for
day four,
actually.



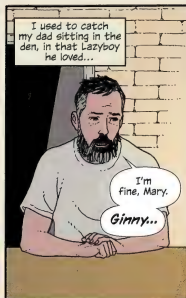
On day five
they give me
some medicine
to combat the
withdrawals.



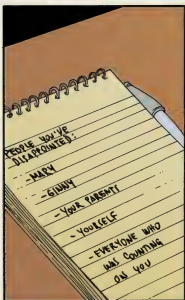
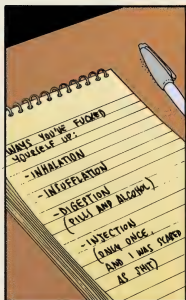
On day six, I attend my first Group Meeting.



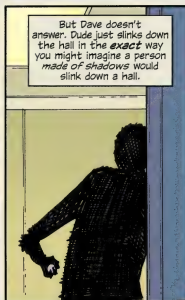
One week
in and it's Family
Visitation Day.



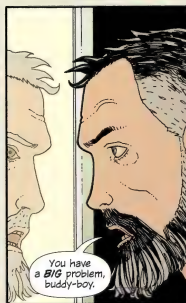
On my
eighth day, I go
ahead and make
some *lists*.



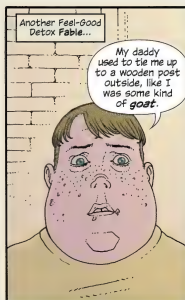
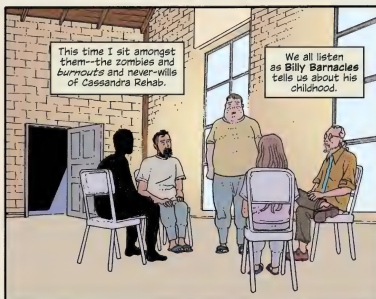
On day nine,
Shadowy Dave
shows up in my
doorway.



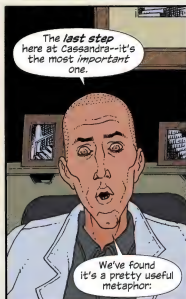
On day ten I
speak *The Real
Truth* into the
mirror.



Day eleven
and it's back
to Group.



On day twelve I score a meeting with the facility therapist; he seems nice enough.



On day thirteen
I stand in the
sun and try to
feel the warm
hand of God on
my cheek.

And for a second I
think maybe I do.
But the *hand*...

It's calloused.
Rough.

...and connected to a
mouth that speaks
with a weird lisp...

"Shiva the
Devourer."

"Yahweh
Jones."

"The Thing Made Of
Other Things."

"Johnnie Walker
Red, One Ice Cube."

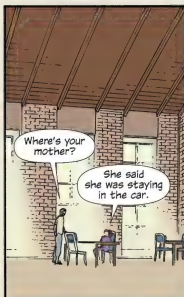
"A Fresh Batch of Cocaine, Run
Through a Triple-Solvent Wash,
Stripped of Byproducts and
Amphetamines..."

Feh.

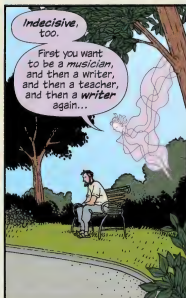
Being fucked
up--*that's* my
higher power.

Two weeks in
and it's Family
Visitation again.

But this time's a
little different...



On day fifteen,
the ghost of
my dead mother
hovers around my
head and berates
me for hours.



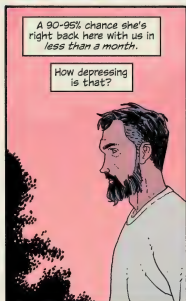
Day sixteen
is Susan
Trackmarks' big
graduation.

We all stand in front of the Cassandra to wish her well on her "journey," out there into the big, wild world of prescription bottles and *lotto numbers* and 24-hour liquor stores.



A 90-95% chance she's
right back here with us in
less than a month.

How depressing
is that?



Godspeed,
Susan.

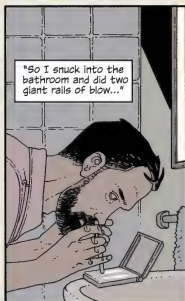


...hope your
invisible wall is
high enough.

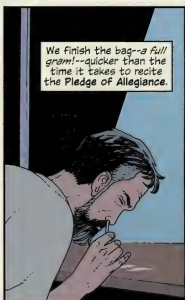
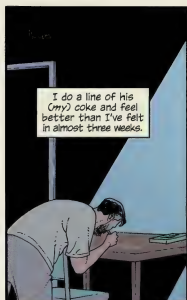
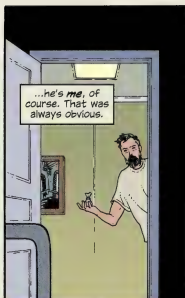


On day
seventeen,
me and Billy
Barnacles sit in
the garden and
talk for hours.

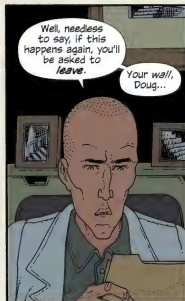
(At least I think
it's hours--time
moves kinda weird
over here at the
Cassandra Home
for the Dead.)



On day eighteen,
Shadowy Dave
shows up at
my door again,
doing his whole
*beckoning-in-
the-darkness*
thing.



The next day, I
get chewed out
by the brass.



I decide
to spend the
following day
in bed, alone.

...but an old pal winds
up making an impromptu
appearance.

**YOU'RE
NEVER GONNA GET
BETTER.**

I know.

**I'LL
ALWAYS BE
HERE.**

I know.

**THE REST
OF YOUR
SORRY
LITTLE
LIFE.**

I know.

**FOR ALL
ETERNITY,
DOUGY-BOY.**

I KNOW!!

Three weeks.
You know what
that means...



Day twenty-two.
I try reading.

When I was in college,
I could rip through a
whole novel in a day.



But as I got older, my
attention span was *diced*
to *shreds*; I can barely
squeeze in two chapters
before bed now.



"At the foot
of the mountain, through
the narrow lanes made by rows
of ramshackle village huts, the
etymologist walks alongside
his guide, a large stack of
money weighing down
his pocket ..."



...I sit there in the Cassandra
garden and flip pages for five
hours straight...no phones or
TVs or *Happy Hour 2-for-1's*
to distract me.



The book's not even
all that *great*, but
I don't *care*...



I'm just totally *in it*--right
there next to this *sorry*
schmuck trying to find
an impossible word.



I finish the last
page just as the sun
begins to set...

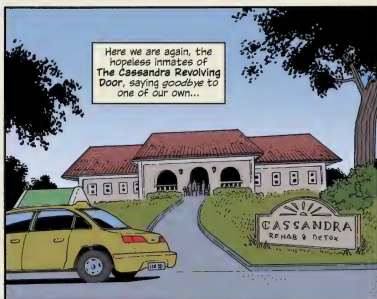
"The white-clad
man on the mountaintop calls
his giant spider, who makes a
meal of the poisoned
etymologist."



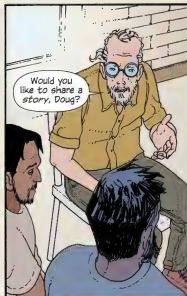
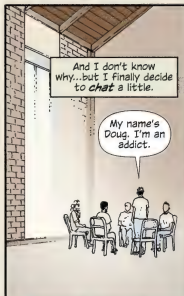
...maybe I'll renew
my library card when
I get out of here.



Day
twenty-three.
Billy Barnacles is
graduating from
the program.



On my
twenty-fourth
day, I attend
Group, per facility
requirements.



Day twenty-five.
Shadowy Me...
Dave...whatever
is back at the
door.



With three days left of my residency, I try one more time to feel the warm hand of God on my cheek.

That hand...it's softer than I remember....

...it *presses* its names into my brain...



A Public Park on a Sunny Day.



Ginny Drawing Pictures.



A Good, Sturdy Chair in Which to Sit and Read a Book.



Funny Stuff. Sad Stuff. *All the Stuff.*



The Way My Wife Still Loves Me Despite...Everything.



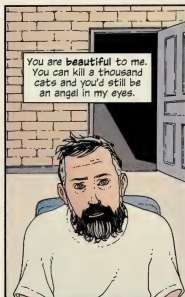
Patience. The name of God is Patience.

For others--for yourself.

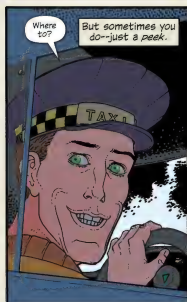
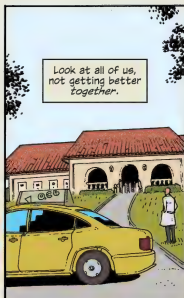


Whatever you can manage.

The penultimate day. One last Group Session for Doug Metsker, who's been sober for a little over a week!



The last day.
Graduation.



HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?



What follows are variant covers from the eighth volume of **ICE CREAM MAN**, by Welder Wings, Jesús Aguado, Trevor Henderson, Caspar Wijngaard, and Frazer Irving.

And hey, a little extra from Welder Wings, for fun.

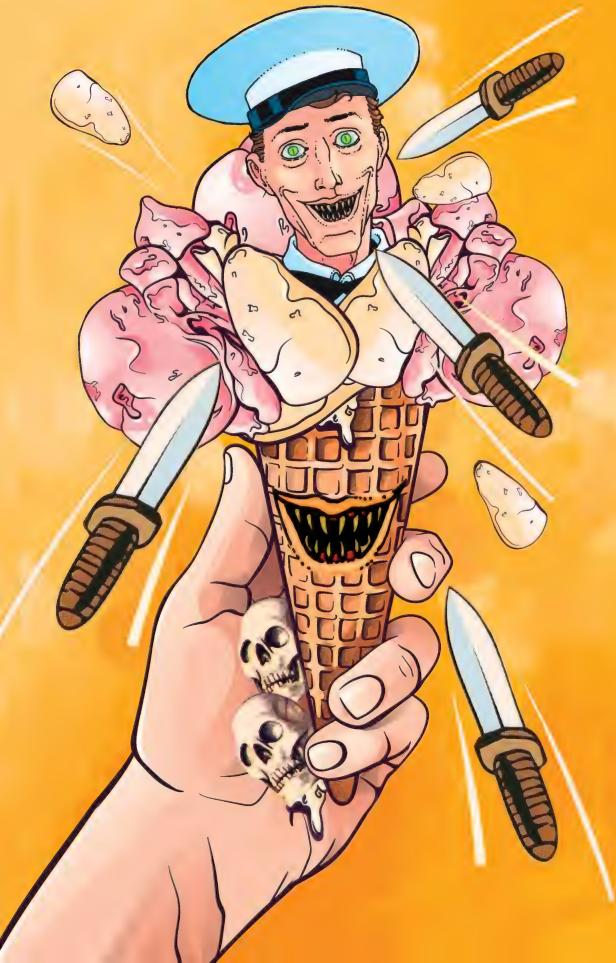














Open wide for four more scoops of the
bestselling psycho-horror comic

Ice Cream Man

Here, bound with medium-grade paper glue, are four tales of objective subjectivity: a man's last wishes are carried out; a controlled experiment loses all control; a cosmic scale is balanced (in verse!); Doug tries his darndest to get clean.

It's another assemblage of anguish and ennui for the
anthologically inclined art appreciator. Lickety split, y'all!

This eighth volume collects issues 29-32 of the critically
acclaimed horror anthology from Eisner-nominated writer
W. Maxwell Prince (HAHA, ONE WEEK IN THE LIBRARY),
artist **Martin Morazzo** (*She Could Fly*, ART BRUT), and
colorist **Chris O'Halloran** (TIME BEFORE TIME, *The Punisher*).

"A perfectly bitter confection for those
with a taste for short-form shockers."

— *Publishers Weekly*

"We loved it like we love mint
chocolate chip ice cream, which
is to say we loved it a lot."

— *Nerdist*

"You'll never look at your double-
scoop the same way again."

— *Vulture/NYMag*

"Incredibly good."

— *The Oregonian*

"F*cking awesome. The writing
is strange and deeply unsettling,
and the artwork is gorgeous."

— *Brian K. Vaughan*

(SAGA, PAPER GIRLS)

"You'll want a scoop of this comic
because we're in for a treat."

— *Geek.com*

"Will have you questioning everything."

— *Amazon Book Review*



Horror
Rated M / Mature
Collects ICE CREAM MAN 29-32

DR. VINK

WITH A VA-VA-VA

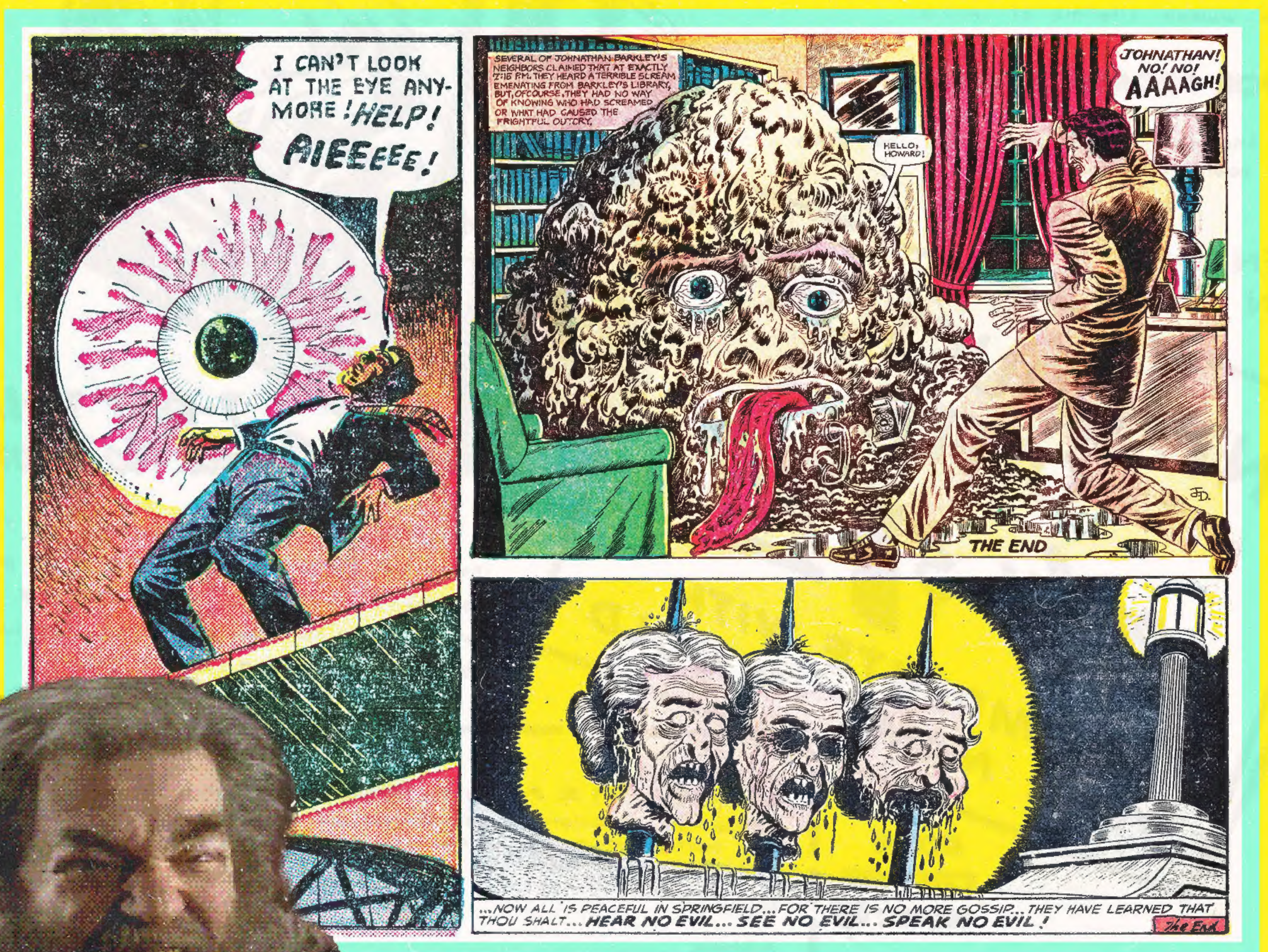
A DR. VINK FANCY HD RIP

~ RIPPIN POORLY SINCE MAY 2022 ~

EDITOR'S NOTE:

THIS FANCY HD RIP WON'T TRIGGER ANYONE'S PHOBIA OF SCARY AI 
WORRY NOT! THOSE FRIGHTENING COMPUTERS LEFT THESE IMAGES UNTOUCHED

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011001 0110000 0110010 0110011 0110001 0110010 0110000 0110010 0110011 0110010 0110010 0110010



...AND I AM NOT A NUT BAG



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